

Administration of Joseph R. Biden, Jr., 2023

**Remarks on the Resignation of Secretary of Labor Martin J. Walsh and the
Nomination of Julie A. Su To Be Secretary of Labor**
March 1, 2023

The President. Whoa! *[Applause]* I think they like you. *[Applause]* Good morning.

I'm going to—I'm going to close my eyes and pretend you were clapping for me. *[Laughter]*
Please have a seat if you have one.

I think they like you. That's what I think. You see the Senator right here? If in fact you are not picked to be the next Secretary of Labor, I would be run out of town. *[Laughter]*

First of all, let me say, I don't know—I see a lot of Members of Congress here who are strong—and by the way, they've got a full day today. They're supposed to be in Baltimore for a—up in—for a caucus up there. And I don't want to start reading out names in case some aren't here. But there's a—you've had overwhelming support in the caucus—and in both the House and the Senate, I might add.

And I'm joined by Vice President Harris and—who chairs the House—White House Task Force on Worker Organization and Empowerment to ensure that every worker—every worker—has a voice and the ability to exercise their sacred right to organize. That's a big deal: the right to organize. You know—*[applause]*.

We've had a—we've had no better partner in this effort and so much more that he's done than—

[At this point, the President briefly imitated a Boston accent.]

——Marty Walsh from Boston.

Marty, stand up, please. Marty has several—has several claims to fame. He's a proud son of Irish immigrants; mayor of Boston; was the—for the last 2 years, Secretary of Labor. And I assume he knows something about hockey. *[Laughter]*

I asked him if he'd take me with him, but he wouldn't. *[Laughter]* Chris, he thought I'd be the hockey puck. Anyway. *[Laughter]*

Look, it matters. I promised to be the most prounion President in Presidential history. I'm going to put this down. And, folks—*[applause]*. Thank you.

The reason—*[applause]*—thank you. The reason I ran was to rebuild the backbone of this Nation—the middle class—and grow the economy from the bottom up and the middle out, not from the top down.

Because, look, when, in fact, you build it that way, everybody does well. The rich still do very well. They don't get hurt. It's like—it's not a punishment, you know? But when it's trickle down, not a whole lot dropped on our kitchen table when I was growing up. Not much trickle there. And we're changing that.

You know, there was a law passed in the early thirties saying that—not that unions "could" organize, but we "should" have more unions. We should have more unions—encouraging them.

We're all guided by things that we've heard our parents and our grandparents repeat a thousand times growing up and as a young person. And my dad—I know some of you are tired of hearing me say, my dad used to say, and he meant it: "A job is about a lot more than a paycheck.

It's about your dignity. It's about respect. It's about being able to look your kid in the eye and say, 'Everything is going to be all right,' and mean it." And he meant it.

Marty Walsh understands that—each of these fundamental principles in his very bones. In the past 2 years, we've made incredible progress, in my view. And Marty has been an overwhelming reason why we have made that progress.

Our economy sees record job growth. Historic laws that have—I've signed are going to create even more new jobs in years to come. And Marty put us on track to meet the bold goal of a million new registered apprenticeships by 2025. And that means training and pathways for everyone from teachers to truckers, to cybersecurity specialists, to construction workers.

Marty played a pivotal role in delivering rail workers this historic pay raise they got, to prevent a potential catastrophic strike at the same time.

But when he—we signed a law—the Butch Lewis Act—that protects the pensions of millions of—[inaudible]. Sounds easy now, but it was a long time in coming. [Laughter] Thanks, Marty, for all your hard work.

Marty has done an incredible job fighting wage theft, combating—the way that workers and laborers is exploited, and protecting workers and their rights and their safety. You know, for example, he helped recover more than \$520 million in back wages for liquidated damage for more than two—335 workers—335,000 workers, I should say.

And he made sure employers understand the National Labor Relations Act, again: It didn't say we should "allow" unions; it said we should "encourage" unions. And we're going to continue to do that. Thanks for—to Marty's leadership, support for unions in America now is higher than it's been anytime in the last 60 years, Marty.

I've known Marty a long time. I know his heart. Marty, thank you for everything you've done. Thank you for standing up for labor. Thank you for standing for ordinary people. And thank you for having my back, pal.

And most of all, thank you to your partner Lorrie, who is watching from home. He's here. He's here. [Laughter] Front row.

And I know your mom Mary is watching from home as well. Mary, you've raised an incredible son. You raised an incredible son. If I ever want anybody in the foxhole with me, I want Marty Walsh there.

And, Marty, you've been incredible. I really mean it. We are grateful for your service. We're grateful to your service to the American workers and to our Nation.

And Marty is the first to say the Department of Labor—the Department of Labor has accomplished—has accomplished an awful lot, but it wouldn't have done all this—been done without Julie Su. She's been a strong partner and a real leader.

She used to be the Secretary of Labor before—[laughter]—in a State about as big as the rest of America. [Laughter]

Julie knows in her bones as well the people who get up every morning and go to work and bust their necks just to make an honest living deserve something—someone to fight on their side, to give them an even shot—just a shot—so they don't get stiffed. Well, that's been happening to too many workers for much too long.

Fighting to make sure they have a fair shot is—and no one is left behind. Julie has spent her life fighting for that vision, her entire professional career.

And as a civil rights lawyer and a leader of California's State labor department, the biggest in the entire country, Julie spent 2 years [decades; White House correction] representing workers—many without college degrees, many who didn't speak English, but who worked long, long hours at low pay and were just looking for a little bit of dignity—just a little bit of dignity—for themselves and their families.

She's increased the minimum wage, cracked down on wage theft, protected trafficked workers, established and enforced workplace safety standards, and so much more.

The Department of Labor—she's led the effort to ensure jobs of high-growth industries like semiconductor manufacturing, broadband, health care, and so much more, making sure they're good-paying jobs, high-quality jobs, and union jobs. Union jobs.

When I spoke with the Business Roundtable, they asked—wanted to know why I was so pro-union. I said, "To save you money." [Laughter] No kidding.

Most Americans out there think you want to be electrician or you want to be a laborer or you want to be a carpenter, you show up and you get a job. Well, you spend 4 to 5 years as an apprentice. It's like going back to college with a little added degree.

They're the best workers in the world. And you might as well get the job done right the first time and, long term, save you a lot of money.

And by the way, I didn't get much blowback when I made that comment. [Laughter]

And like—and like—and like it is for Marty, it's personal for Julie. Born in Wisconsin, she's the daughter of Chinese immigrants. Mom of a union worker—her mom was a union worker, and her dad was a small-business owner. She went on to law school, served the people of California.

Julie is the American Dream. And she is what the American Dream is about. More importantly—I think even more importantly, she is committed to making sure that dream is within the reach of every American. Every American. That's what she's all about.

She is going to make sure it happens as the fourth Asian American woman in my Cabinet.

But look—you know, I know, Julie, your most important title is "Mom," and she has two accomplished, wonderful daughters. Stand up, girls, will you?

The reason—the reason we were a few—a few minutes late: I was asking them what they were doing. They're both in college still. And we had a little debate in there whether Amherst is better than Yale or Yale is better than Amherst. [Laughter] But anyway, I won't get into that. [Laughter]

It's my honor—and I mean it sincerely—my honor to nominate Julie Su to be our next Secretary of Labor. [Applause] I think they like you. [Laughter]

And I ask the United States Senate to move this nomination quickly, so we continue—can continue the progress to build this economy that works for everyone.

Julie, thank you for your willingness to serve. Thank you for all you've done. And thank you for what you're about to do. God love you, as my mother would say.

All you.

Secretary-designate Su. Thank you so much. Thank you. Okay. [Laughter] Thank you.

Thank you, Mr. President, for your words and for your trust.

Sixty years ago, my mom came to the United States on a cargo ship because she couldn't afford a passenger ticket. Recently, she got a call from the President of the United States telling her that her daughter was going to be nominated to be U.S. Labor Secretary.

So I believe in the transformative power of America, and I know the transformative power of a good job. I know because it was the kind of job that my mom got that had predictable hours, paid sick leave, health benefits, a secure income, and a pension when she retired. A union job that gave my parents a path to the middle class and gave our family the kind of breathing room that the President talks about.

We have never had a President who has made workers, worker well-being, and worker power so central to his vision of a strong nation and a strong economy.

Mr. President, when you said you wanted to be the most pro-worker, pro-union President in history and restore decency and build the middle class, I said, "Sign me up for that." [Laughter] I want to help do that. And it's been my honor to be the Deputy Secretary. Those shared values are what I will work to make real every day.

To Secretary Marty Walsh, with whom I have worked side by side: You embraced a true, real partnership between us from day one.

You have changed the world for millions of workers, and you will be sorely missed not just by those of us who got to work with you every day, but by those workers who have benefited from your leadership. And I'm grateful for all that I've learned from you. And I am proud to be chosen to, in the words of the President, "finish the job."

I have also been able to work in close partnership with the people who are the Department of Labor. To my team, who's here and across the country, especially the career staff who have devoted your lives to the mission of the DOL: You are the heart and soul of the department, and I'm thrilled to continue our good work together.

And I stand here today deeply grateful for community. And as I look out, I see that today is a celebration of that community.

When the President talks about those who've been forgotten or invisible, I know what he means because I have spent my career fighting for them to be seen. So to all workers who are toiling in the shadows, to workers who are organizing for power and respect in the workplace, know that we see you, we stand with you, and we will fight for you.

And to my daughters, my *băobèis*—[laughter]—who are here: Thank you for the love, for missing class to be here today—[laughter]—for the sacrifices that you have made so Mama can do this work. I would not be who I am without you.

We have an extraordinary opportunity to build an economy where no one feels invisible, where every individual and community not only gets to benefit from the President's transformative vision for America, but also gets to help make it real. So let's build together.

Thank you so much.

The President. Congratulations. Ladies and gentlemen—[applause].

Girls, come up here.

Secretary-designate Su. Oh, come up.

The President. Come up.

Ladies and gentlemen, I know there are more presidents in this room that I met with—when I met with the G-20 Presidents—[laughter]—but—of unions. But I also know there's a bunch of

Cabinet members here. Would all the Cabinet members walk up on the stage here—that are here? Come up. The reason I did it: I wanted to know if anybody is working today. [Laughter]

Secondly, we've got a bunch of Members of Congress who are here today too. I don't want to ask them to have to come up, but if you want to, you can. [Laughter] I've got to start reading down—but at any rate, Members of Congress, come on up.

And I want you to know: Maybe your strongest, most intimidating supporter is right there. The distinguished Senator. God love you. It worked—[inaudible].

Folks, all kidding aside, putting politics aside: We can do a lot of good things. We have a shot to really do some really good things that are totally consistent with everything about what this country is about. And I'm just anxious to get—to finish the job here.

And so thank you, thank you, thank you. Thank all of you.

And I wouldn't be standing here were it not for labor. Thank you all for all you've done for me, but much, much more importantly, all you've done for the country. Thank you, thank you, thank you.

You're welcome to hang around.

NOTE: The President spoke at 9:42 a.m. in the East Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Sens. Mazie Hirono and Christopher A. Coons; Lorrie Higgins, girlfriend of Secretary Walsh; and LiMei and AnLing Vera, daughters of Deputy Secretary of Labor Su.

Categories: Appointments and Nominations : Secretary of Labor, nomination, remarks; Resignations and Retirements : Secretary of Labor, resignation, remarks.

Locations: Washington, DC.

Names: Coons, Christopher A.; Harris, Kamala D.; Higgins, Lorrie; Hirono, Mazie K.; Su, Julie A.; Vera, AnLing; Vera, LiMei; Walsh, Martin J.; Walsh, Mary.

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